

A photograph of two young boys sitting on a stone wall. The boy on the left has brown hair and is looking towards the right. The boy on the right has blonde hair and is also looking towards the right. They are both wearing blue t-shirts and light-colored jeans. The background shows a stone wall and a bright, possibly outdoor setting.

“...earthy, realistic,
humorous, and
Scriptural.”

Douglas Wilson
Author, *Future Men*

Surviving, Teaching
and Appreciating Boys

RAISING REAL MEN

HAL AND MELANIE YOUNG

PRAISE FOR RAISING REAL MEN

“In a time when our culture seems intent on emasculating our boys, it is a real pleasure to find Christians who are pushing back, responding with biblical answers. *Raising Real Men* combines a number of important characteristics in giving advice to parents of young boys — **it is earthy, realistic, humorous and scriptural**. Hal and Melanie Young write from a homeschooling setting, but much of what they have to say is also pertinent to Christian parents of boys in private Christian schools. I hope this book gets a wide reading in both realms.”

Douglas Wilson

Minister of Christ Church, Moscow, Idaho

Author, *Future Men*

“As the grandfather of six boys ranging in age from two to fifteen, I am acutely aware of the need that this book fills, and quite admirably. **This is just what the doctor ordered for parents who want to raise capable Christian men of character.**”

John Rosemond

Author, *Parenting by The Book*

“*Raising Real Men* is for real men who aspire to pass on a legacy of strength, courage and fidelity to Christ our King. **It encouraged me as a father. I pray it will encourage you.**”

Dr. R.C. Sproul, Jr.

Teacher, Author, *When You Rise Up*

Husband of One and Father of Seven Blessings

“Raising boys can be a tremendous challenge for parents, especially when you have more than a few. Hal and Melanie in *Raising Real Men* have approached this subject from a Biblical perspective and...bring a unique practical aspect to raising boys where the rubber meets the road. **This is a book that every family should have no matter the number of boys and even those families without boys** as the book gives tremendous insight into understanding how boys think and why they act as they do. **This book meets a crying need in an area where there is very little specific direction.** Thank you Hal and Melanie for this outstanding work of the Lord.”

J. Michael Smith, Esq.

President, Home School Legal Defense Association

“Hal and Melanie Young have written a delightful book for the parents of boys. With biblical insight and lessons learned from raising six sons of their own, they have provided **a treasure trove of practical wisdom for dads and moms who are blessed with the challenge of helping boys become men.** Entertainment, education, risk, leadership, spirituality, violence, vocation and finances are some of the topics that addressed. In a day of sexual confusion and a widespread feminization of our culture, sage counsel on masculinity and ways to train young men in it is both needed and welcome.”

Tom Ascol

Executive Director, Founders Ministries

“**Principled, practical, and persuasive,** this is a book I would recommend to anyone who is interested in learning more about what boys are all about.”

Sen. Kevin Lundberg

Colorado State Senate

“Wow. *Raising Real Men* is one of those books that you’ll read through quickly, then go back to use as a reference. It’s full of anecdotes, resources, suggestions — and one-liners; with no pop psychology! **Pastors should read this book and recommend it to families — whether they have sons or daughters.**”

Rev. Dr. J. Curtis and Sandra Lovelace
Lifework Forum

“Pam and I have ten children — seven boys and three girls. The oldest is thirty-two years old and the youngest is only a year old. That fact gives us a perspective that most people do not have ...

When I first picked up *Raising Real Men* and read, “Young boys can be downright destructive.” I knew that this was going to be a book that was not only entertaining and challenging but also truthful. For you see, Richardson boys can be downright destructive too!

Hal and Melanie have done what few people are willing to do. **They have opened their hearts and lives and allowed us to see what is really on the inside. They have dropped all their barricades and defenses for the sole purpose of helping you and me to raise our children to be Real Men.** They teach that we must see our children’s potential — not just their potential to work — their potential to become mighty in spirit — men who will come along beside us and after us, having a real and godly impact on this world and reaching many for Jesus Christ.

It is my hope and prayer that reading *Raising Real Men* will give you a vision for raising sons who are protectors, persistent, honorable and obedient.”

Mike Richardson
Missionary in Mexico, Publisher of *El Hogar Educador*

“Hal and Melane Young have six sons and are disciples of Jesus. They know how to raise real men. This book is a treasure trove of practical tips to help you to raise your sons right. **It will answer your questions, help you avoid mistakes, bring them up in the Lord, and understand them. I highly recommend it.**”

Chris Klicka

Senior Counsel, Home School Legal Defense Association
Author of *The Right Choice, Homeschool Heroes*, etc.

“I highly recommend this book to all parents of boys. It’s filled with informative tips concerning the challenges and rewards of parenting sons. **God has gifted Hal and Melanie with great insights about raising young men.**”

Michelle Caskey

www.homeschool-your-boys.com

“Hal and Melanie have put together a **wonderful, warm-hearted, and practical** little book on raising sons into men of God — **a must-read for any parent blessed with boys.**”

Kevin Swanson

Director, Generations with Vision

“**Hal and Melanie Young have their finger on the pulse of what it takes to grow confident, strong, godly young men who will be ready to take on the world at a young age.** Mothers of boys who read *Raising Real Men* will be challenged and affirmed... learning to co-mentor our sons as they move toward their callings and divine destinies, being launched, one by one, like flaming arrows into eternity.”

Heather Idoni

www.HomeschoolingBOYS.com

FIRST THINGS

*How blessed the man who does not walk
Where wicked men would guide his feet,
Nor stands in paths with sinful men
Nor sits upon the scorner's seat.
Jehovah's law is his delight,
His meditation both day and night.¹*

This book is written from a Christian perspective, and we've tried to illustrate as often as possible how we've applied the Bible in our family's day to day lives. It's a principle in our home that we try to bring Scripture to bear in any situation so that our children are saturated in a Biblical worldview. We discuss it with them, point it out to them, and make sure they know we're looking to God's word. What we call the basic commandment for homeschoolers is Deuteronomy 6:4-7:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

Our sons are blessed to grow up in a Christian home, under the teaching and example of Christian parents – not that either is perfect, but that both are forgiven and seeking to grow. We have friends who grew up in non-Christian homes, whether they were saved as adults or met the Lord through Bible camps or a children's outreach program. Often they seem to struggle with concepts and words and ideas that our children have heard from birth, principles that are familiar and comfortable to people who grew up in the church. While the boys are blessed to be surrounded by Christian testimony from their birth, it doesn't save a one of them.

The fact they're homeschooled with Christian-oriented textbooks and daily devotions doesn't save them either. Their Christian heritage doesn't, nor their attendance at a good church. Each of them has to come to terms with God's command to repent and believe for themselves. Only God can change their hearts, and for that mercy we pray and witness and admonish them. We've seen the pain of enough families whose children brought up in Christian circles suddenly fell into disbelief, unwed pregnancy, drug use, or divorce. We just can't assume everything will turn out for the best just because they were in the best circumstances at the beginning.

If we don't take the time and effort to teach our sons about God, and Christ, and sin, and redemption, and sanctification, then we have failed them miserably. By God's grace they may be saved through other influences, but the gift of a Christian home will be of no assistance to them if we don't make it so.

Unfortunately, there is also no special checklist that we can follow that will ensure that our children come to Christ. Our goals are that our children would be without excuse and that we would be without regrets. We want to make sure there is never a

question that they've heard the way to God's forgiveness, whether they embrace it or reject it.

In Your Heart

The most important effort we can make for our boy's spiritual health is to live the Christian life day to day and hour to hour. That's the pattern of Deuteronomy 6. But notice the first part of that passage – the word of God in your heart. You can't possibly live as a Christian before your children if you're not sure you know the Lord yourself. Boys are very sensitive to hypocrisy and they deeply desire to know their leaders are worthy of leading, that they believe and live what they say they do.

While the Bible has enough mystery and doctrine to keep a saint busy through this life and the next, the basics of faith and salvation are amazingly simple. Accept God's verdict that all of us have fallen short of His commandments and we are all in a state of rebellion against Him, a very good King.² The only possible sentence we can receive is final and eternal separation from God and any goodness He provides, which of course is *any* goodness whatsoever.³ Our only option is to appeal to the court of God's judgment for the only relief available – a substitute to bear the punishment in our place.⁴ Jesus, being the sinless Son of God, is the only man who doesn't have his own sentence to serve out; Christ is therefore the only one with righteousness to apply to our behalf.⁵ When we invest our entire trust and hope in His forgiveness, abandoning any thought of earning our forgiveness from God,⁶ then we rebels receive the King's pardon, a new heart, and His Holy Spirit. We also become members of His family – and disciples of His Son.⁷ At that point, we're finally able to live as Christians for our sons' example, because that's what we are.

Teach them diligently

The second part shows us how to teach the things of God to our children: in the course of everyday life. Real discipling happens as our children watch us confront life on a daily basis making decisions based on the Word of God *and* explaining our reasoning to them. When we decide to unload all the children from the van and go back inside the store because we realize we received too much change, explaining that keeping the extra change would be stealing and breaking one of the Ten Commandments, our children see how seriously we take the Word of God. When we lose our temper and discipline someone unjustly or speak too harshly to our son, if we apologize and ask their forgiveness, they understand what repentance is and why we mean it when we say we are sinners saved by grace alone. Your example, especially when you don't realize anyone is watching, is the most powerful sermon you can preach your children, especially when you've pointed out why you behave the way you do.

Part of the teaching mentioned in Deuteronomy 6 goes beyond example, though. You've got to tell your children your heart and explicitly teach the Bible to them or they won't have a real example to follow. Like we said, good works never saved anyone. We decided many years ago to have devotions during our home-schooling time every day and family devotions in the evening. Hal has always told Melanie, "If you don't have time for devotions, you don't have time for school." We've found that to be true – there's almost no point in school without getting our hearts right first. Now that Hal is working at home, we can meet all together in the morning for one extended time. Whatever time of day you choose, the most important part of a family time of worship is doing it. It's far better that you worship with your children every day for a few minutes instead of doing an hour and a half marathon and then not getting around to it again for weeks afterward. Even if we do that, it's important to have the humility to begin again,

as many times as we need to, recognizing that we stumble but there is One to lift us up again.

It is so important that our sons understand how to teach their own children the Word of God. Years ago, we heard Gregg Harris teach about how easily a Christian heritage is lost. The first generation loves God and does right, so they teach the next generation to do right, but maybe they neglect to explain why they do it. The second generation may teach their children to do right but they can't explain why. The third generation has no idea why their parents did things, so they seek their own path. Harris explained it much better than that, but the crucial part is passing on the gospel and the teachings of Scripture, not just a checklist of rules of behavior.

To do that, we keep things pretty simple. We choose a book of the Bible to read through, alternating types of books (a historical book from the Old Testament might be followed by one of the Gospels, then a section of the Psalms or one of the prophets, for example). Each day we read a short passage and explain it to our children. An excellent example of how to do this is J.C. Ryle's *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, a set of commentaries on Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The title looks forbidding, but Ryle, a conservative Anglican bishop at the end of the 1800's, writes in a very clear, winsome style. Reading through the commentaries gives you a good idea of how much to cover and how to draw meaning from the passage at hand.

We'll also choose a "hymn of the week," our plan to teach our children the hymns and spiritual songs. Each week we'll choose a hymn to sing all the way through each day, explaining the meaning of one verse each day. The old hymnbooks are full of encouragement and teaching, and we need to help our sons learn to worship with their minds, not just follow the music, when they sing.

We work on memorizing verses and longer passages of Scripture, and we've also used a simple catechism to give them a doctrinal framework to hang them on. Catechisms are an old teaching tool – one might say they were the FAQs of the church, since they are written in a question-and-answer format. *A Catechism for Boys and Girls*, which we use, begins very simply:

Q: Who made you?

A: God made me.

Q: What else did God make?

A: God made all things.

Q: Why did God make you and all things?

A: For His own glory.

Even three- and four-year-olds can handle that.⁸

Most denominations have some form of doctrinal statement like this to memorize or at least become familiar with, and many are available for downloading online at no cost. Whatever version your sons learn, whether the children's edition or the more complex adult catechisms, they're useful tools to help explain the faith to them and set certain principles in their minds.

We also pray, discussing prayer requests, with each person taking a turn and praying out loud. It's good to keep a prayer list, not just to make sure you remember who and what you're praying about, but also to keep notes on how God has answered. It's also good to keep an alert ear to how the boys pray; it's too easy to slip into rote phrases that don't really reflect the state of their hearts. We need to be careful of the same thing; prayer is a conversation with the living God, not a recitation or spell we're casting.

This is an investment in our sons' future, as well. We believe it's important that a man be comfortable reading the Bible, draw-

ing basic applications from what he finds there, and that he be able to pray extemporaneously in groups. It's part of his role as a leader in the family as well as the community and church. Who will teach our grandchildren if we let this generation slip away or fall silent?

As You Walk in the Way

Beyond formal teaching, we teach our children as things come up. Any group of children will eventually disclose a tattletale in the bunch. We were blessed to find an illustrated poster called *The Brother Offended Checklist*, published by Doorposts.⁹ Using it as a teaching tool, we've been able to teach our children the expectation that an offended believer should seek to restore the relationship someone else has broken. "Mama, my brother did —" is usually met with the countersign, "Have you talked to him about it?" We remind them that Matthew 18 teaches the need to go to the offender privately first, before bringing the authorities into the dispute. Responding to real situations with Biblical advice and Biblical words shows our children how to apply Scripture to their daily lives.

One caution that we've had to apply to ourselves as well as the children is that if we expect our sons to take the Bible seriously, we need to hold them and ourselves to a high standard. We don't allow jokes, puns, or clever turns of phrase using the words of Scripture, or for that matter, the words or tunes of hymns. This may be difficult, because if our children are raised up steeped in Scriptural language and spiritual songs, those will be the familiar phrases and tunes that come to mind when they feel silly. Frankly, sometimes the church is no help here; how many church nurseries have we seen with a sign in the baby area that says "We shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed,"¹⁰ as if Jesus won't mind us lampooning His glorious return to make a

cute decoration by the diaper table? True, Jesus and the prophets used sarcasm on occasion, but we who aren't speaking the inspired word of God need to be careful we don't undermine the authority of the written word.

We probably made an error with our older sons when we thought it would be good to explain our decisions and directions as much as we did. Our hope was to gain their minds and wills, not just their compliance. Likely, most parents who've gone this route could tell you it tends to breed contempt, as if obedience isn't necessary until agreement is reached.

Mom: "Son, get out of the street!"
Son: "Why?"

Write your own ending.

Now we don't explain ourselves to our children every time or even most of the time, but it is still important that they learn why certain rules are made and why certain decisions have to happen. Our rule now is "Obey first, then ask me why, and I'll be glad to explain." That's when you find out who really wants to understand, and who was just stalling for time. It's a difficult balance to strike, but so worthwhile.

Try and make spiritual topics a common, familiar subject of conversation. Garrison Keillor wrote in one of his "Lake Wobegon" stories about a father who had two special voices, one he used in speaking about GOD, and one when speaking about MONEY. It's a sign of discomfort, not reverence. After all, when the King James Version speaks of God as "Thou," it's a familiar form of address, not a formal one.¹¹ The old translation addresses God like a family member, though One due incredible respect. We are spiritual people, citizens of a heavenly kingdom, and there is no need for a tricked-up, phony-baloney kind of *awesomeness* when we talk

about the real life — here and hereafter — that we're living. God wants a true humility before Him, not a well-acted role-play.

Still, there are times that spiritual subjects can get personal. They should. God has a way of getting into things that we'd rather keep hidden from everybody, which should tell us it's time to dig into them first. Driving, working, or doing some other task together may be opportunities to broach potentially uncomfortable subjects. A casual question like, "How's your relationship with the Lord, son?" or "What have you been reading in your devotions lately?" can open up a conversation that will let you know what's going on in his heart. It can give you a chance to encourage him in the things of the Lord. Just remember our children can see right through us. They can handle flawed parents who are trying to give them a hand up, but a hypocrite who puts on the Righteous Face to put a struggling boy in his place won't win or keep their hearts for long.

We can't do anything that will ensure the salvation of our children — that's God's business. However, we can do lots to make sure that they know the good news, see the Christian life lived out, know that we truly believe what we are telling them. That way we'll have no regrets, and Lord willing, neither will they.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 8

¹ Psalm 1, first stanza, from *The Book of Psalms for Singing*

² Romans 3:10-12

³ Matthew 7:21-23; James 1:17

⁴ 1 Timothy 2:5-6

⁵ Isaiah 53:4-6; John 14:6; 2 Corinthians 5:21

⁶ Ephesians 2:8-10

⁷ Romans 8:1-18

⁸ You can read the entire catechism with Scripture references on the website of the Southern Baptist Founders Conference, <http://www.founders.org/library/childcat.html>. It is also included in Dr. Tom Nettles' *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts: The Study of Catechisms in Baptist Life* (Calvary Press, 1998).

⁹ Pam Forster, *The Brother Offended Checklist: What To Tell A Tattletale*, published by Doorposts, 5905 Lookingglass Drive, Gaston, OR 97119 (<http://www.doorposts.com>)

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:51; 2 Corinthians 5:17

¹¹ English has lost distinctions other languages retain. Germans, for example, can be quite strict about who is allowed to address them in a friendly manner, *du* — like the old English “thou” — and the rest of the world, which is expected to maintain its distance as *Sie*. They even have a term, *duzen*, which refers to that permission to be familiar with one another. One of Hal's professors in college kept up correspondence with a persecuted Christian counterpart behind the Iron Curtain for *seven years* before the German decided it was probably all right for them to *duzen* each other. The German Bible uses *Du* to address the Almighty.